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# Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2785 | 15 December 2021 - 4 January 2022 | socialistworker.co.uk

DOWNING ST PARTIES ● OMICRON FAILURES  
● FUELING CORRUPTION ● RAMPANT RACISM

# MAKE THIS JOHNSON'S LAST XMAS





## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'The prime minister will not have lied about any parties'**

Tory chief whip Mark Spencer

**'It was huge, there must have been 40 to 50 people. It was really bad.'**

One Number 10 official on the party that didn't happen

**'Respecting the lockdown rules'**

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi gets the short straw and tours the TV studios to tell people Boris Johnson has done nothing wrong

**'It wasn't a formal party but perhaps in hindsight it wasn't the most sensible thing to do'**

Spokesperson for Rishi Sunak denies they had a party at their party in the Treasury

**'Shamefully frivolous, vengeful and partisan'**

Boris Johnson is convinced all his troubles are because the BBC is biased against the government



# Care home company ships profits to Cayman Islands

**THE PRIVATE equity owner of HC-One, Britain's largest care home provider, siphoned £5 million in tax-free profits to the Cayman Islands while claiming extra government support during the pandemic.**

The methods involved are legal but highly complex.

A company run by millionaire Saudi Olympic showjumper Kamal Bahamdan owns HC-One—which, has 265 facilities and a bed capacity of 16,116 in England.

Since 2002, he has been at the helm of Bahamdan Group, a global investment group with investments in telecommunications, education, infrastructure and retail in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Bahamdan Group controls Safanad Ltd, of which Bahamdan is also founder and chief executive, and which is the majority owner of HC-One.

According to a report by the Centre for International Corporate Tax Accountability and Research, the

**THE HOUSE price boom in Britain during the past two decades has delivered an "unearned, unequal and untaxed windfall" that has benefited richer people the most, according to a new study. House prices have risen 86 percent above inflation since 2000, delivering a capital gain on homeowners' main residences worth £3 trillion, according to research by the Resolution Foundation.**

**The figure equates to a fifth of all wealth in Britain. The study found the trend was "amplified" by the pandemic.**



companies in the HC-One structure have loaned money to each other via complex accounting, with very high interest rates.

These high-interest payments reduced taxable profits in Britain and let the company shift money to the Cayman Islands as interest income—where it is tax-free. HC-One stresses it pays full tax in Britain. As the pandemic took hold, HC-One asked councils for

financial help. The firm then received £18.9 million of taxpayer-funded government support.

**A PRIVATE care home director took home 120 times more money than front line staff during the pandemic.**

It's part of a pattern that saw two of the largest care home providers in Britain raise director pay despite ordinary people suffering in the under pressure sector.

Research by the *i* newspaper said that while carers' pay is frequently around £9-£10 an hour, directors' salaries run in the hundreds of thousands of pounds, and in some cases even into the millions.

Analysis of Barchester Healthcare's accounts suggest its highest paid director received 120 times more than care staff employed by the company during 2020.

Care UK's accounts suggest its highest paid director got paid almost 50 times more than care staff last year.

**UN-POLICED AND unenforced anti-corruption laws have made Britain the global money laundering capital for a post-Soviet Union elite, says a report from the thinktank Chatham House. The report highlights the adoption of only four "unexplained wealth orders" (UWO) since the measure was introduced with fanfare in the Criminal Finances Act 2017. A UWO allows for assets to be seized. None have been issued since 2019.**

Fuelled by tax breaks

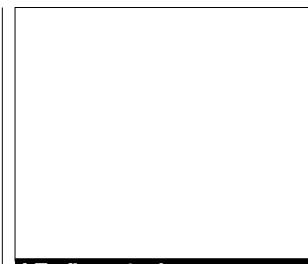
## Giant oil firm Trafigura has cashed in on Covid chaos

**THE OIL, gas and metals merchant Trafigura will hand its top traders and executives more than \$1 billion (£760 million) after making record profits from the market upheaval during the Covid pandemic.**

**The loot is up 87 percent up on last year.**

**Ups and downs in the global commodities market helped the company to almost double its net profit to £2.4 billion, the highest in its 28-year history.**

**Commodity traders have emerged as one of the chief beneficiaries of the tumult in global markets, which has led to record highs in the price**



**for oil, gas and copper. In 2006, a ship Trafigura owned was responsible for dumping toxic waste in Ivory Coast, west Africa.**

**It then sued people who said it had done so. Many people became sick and at least ten people died.**

**Trafigura paid just £130 million in compensation.**

## Billionaires push up global inequality

**THE WORLD'S billionaires grabbed the sharpest rise in their share of wealth last year since the World Inequality Lab began keeping records in 1995, according to a report released last week.**

**Billionaires saw their net worth grow by more than £2.75 trillion in 2020 alone. Meanwhile, the pandemic has pushed approximately 100 million people into extreme poverty, boosting the global total to 711 million in 2021.**

**"Global inequalities seem to be about as great today as they were at the peak of western imperialism in**

**the early 20th century," the study said.**

**The wealthiest 10 percent of the world's population takes 52 percent of global income, compared to the 8 percent share of the poorest half.**

**An individual in the top 10 percent on average wears £92,500 a year.**

**A person from the poorest half earns £2,965 a year.**

**The poorest half of the world's population have only 2 percent of the total wealth.**

**In contrast, the richest 10 percent own 76 percent of all wealth.**

## Tory ministers in secret CIA thinktank

**TWO CURRENT government ministers and two recent justice ministers have been funded by an opaque right wing group that includes spies. The Declassified website says eight current Conservative MPs are associated with the organisation.**

The group, known as Le Cercle, was described by former Conservative minister Alan Clark in his diaries as "a right-wing think (or rather thought) tank, funded by the CIA, which churns Cold War concepts around". Le Cercle has existed since the 1950s but has never revealed its funders. Even the group's existence is only occasionally disclosed. It is unclear how influential Le Cercle—which is believed to meet twice a year, once in Washington DC and once elsewhere—actually is.

Declassified has found that eight current Conservative parliamentarians are associated with the group.

Two current ministers—business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng and his deputy minister Greg Hands—have been funded by Le Cercle.

Kwarteng was given £5,258 to travel to Bahrain in June 2019 for a trip jointly funded by Le Cercle and the Gulf regime.

Three former justice ministers are associated with the group. David Lidington, the justice secretary from 2017-18, and Crispin Blunt, a justice minister from 2010-12, were previously funded by Le Cercle to attend meetings in Washington DC and Madrid.

Rory Stewart, who served as a justice minister under Theresa May, was previously chair of Le Cercle. Other ministers known to have been funded by the group include William Hague and Labour's Margaret Beckett.

## Sun's Slack on Tory party

**TROUBLEMAKER can't decide why the Sun newspaper was initially reluctant to take up the Downing Street party scandal.**

**One thought not to be sniffed at is because last December they threw a rather raucous rule breaking event in fake news towers.**

**Or perhaps it is because the now deputy editor of the Sun is James Slack who was a spokesman for Boris Johnson at the time.**

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# Johnson hangs by a thread but Labour refuses to cut it

by NICK CLARK

**THE LABOUR Party has responded to Boris Johnson's biggest crisis with flag waving and nationalism.**

As Johnson's rein as prime minister teetered on the brink, Labour offered to save him from a crushing defeat in parliament.

Labour MPs were set to vote for Boris Johnson's weak package of new Covid measures as Socialist Worker went to press.

A rebellion by Tory MPs who don't want any new curbs that could damage businesses threatened to defeat Johnson. That meant he relied on Labour to get them through parliament.

In reality, Johnson's measures are far short of what's needed in the face of the Omicron variant's rapid spread (see page 5).

Labour could have brought them down—or at the very least demanded more to protect ordinary people and the NHS.

It could have called for schools to close, and for the hospitality industry to shut down with full wages and sick pay for workers.

But that would have meant angering the bosses and business leaders that Labour leader Keir Starmer is desperate to win over. So instead, Starmer said it was Labour's "patriotic duty" to support the government "in the national interest."

## Resign

It came after leading Labour politicians united in refusing to call for Johnson to go.

Journalists asked them whether Johnson should resign over the revelations that he hosted a Downing Street Christmas quiz when gatherings were banned last year.

It came after a week of scandal in which Johnson lied repeatedly about

## THE TORIES are weak and divided—why won't Keir Starmer put the boot in?

several rule-breaking Christmas parties in Downing Street and government departments. Labour leader Keir Starmer responded with nonsense.

"Look, if me calling for him to resign led to his resignation that would be one thing," he told a BBC interview on Sunday. "But I live in the real world where I know that the most significant issue here is the breach of trust because we're about to have further measures that are necessary."

"At that very moment the trust in the prime minister is at an all time low." You're right to be confused. Starmer said Johnson is "the worst

possible leader at the worst possible time." Johnson is "now so weak, his party is so divided he can't deliver the leadership that this country needs. He can't even discharge the basic functions of government."

But Labour won't call for him to go. Party chair Anneliese Dodds was clearer—she said Labour is powerless to get rid of Johnson.

"Ultimately the resignation of a Conservative prime minister is in the hands of the Conservative Party, not the hands of the Labour Party," she said. Starmer and his supporters believe they're being very clever.

While Johnson collapses, Starmer wants to pose as the responsible, respectable parliamentary leader.

In fact, he is helping Johnson to recover.

The Tories' scandals have put Johnson in crisis because they reveal how they put themselves—and their rich mates—before the lives of ordinary people.

Action on the streets and in workplaces could force them out. No one can expect that from the Labour Party, which thinks clever parliamentary games can beat Johnson—but will let him off the hook.

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## Support the Colston Four

THE TRIAL of four people accused of criminal damage to the statue of slaver Edward Colston began this week in Bristol.

During Black Lives Matter protests last June, protesters pulled down the statue and dumped it into the water by the docks.

Tearing down the statue was a highlight of the protests that exploded in Britain last summer.

Outside Bristol Crown Court on Monday around 150 people showed their solidarity with the Colston Four, who were met with cheers and applause as they arrived.

The protesters face charges



of criminal damage to the statue and its plinth. The trial was due to last eight days.

Rhian Graham, Milo Ponsford, Jake Skuse and Sage Willoughby have pleaded not guilty to every charge.

The Tories' police bill currently going through parliament increases the punishment for tearing down statues—even those that represent slavery—to up to ten years in jail.

We need solidarity with the Colston Four and all protesters resisting Britain's racist past and present.

## Judges putting Assange at risk

THE HIGH court has ruled that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange can be extradited.

Judges' decision last week could allow Assange to be sent to the US, where he faces 18 conspiracy and hacking-related crimes charges.

Assange leaked thousands of documents that revealed the bloody crimes of Western imperialism.

One leak was footage from a US Apache helicopter in Iraq in 2007. It showed Reuters journalist Namir Noor-Eldeen, driver Saeed Chmagh and several others as the Apache shoots and kills them in a public square in Baghdad, Iraq.

An unarmed group of adults and children arrives on the scene in a minivan after the initial shooting.

As they try to transport the wounded, they are fired upon as well.

Many of the leaks were bravely shared by former US soldier Chelsea Manning.

She spent seven years in jail between 2010 and 2017—and was jailed again for just over a year in 2019 after refusing to testify to an inquiry into the WikiLeaks website.

## Danger

In January of this year, a judge blocked Assange's extradition on the grounds that it would put his life in danger.

The US challenged that decision—and was accepted by Lord Chief Justice Lord Burnett and Lord Justice Holroyde.

US representatives made assurances that Assange would not be held in poor conditions when he would stand trial.

But, they also made clear that if Assange is found guilty, he will be thrown into the US's brutal prison complex.

Assange could face up to 175 years in jail.

The final decision to extradite Assange will now rest with home secretary Priti Patel.

If Assange is finally extradited, it will set a worrying precedent for anyone who exposes the crimes of imperialism.

Assange should not be forced to return to the US and should have all the charges against him dropped.

# Could Boris Johnson be on the way out at last?

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**THE TORIES** are beset with crises. From festive parties, to corrupt funding of redecorations and rebellion over Covid policies, Boris Johnson's government is at its weakest.

Johnson has gone from seeming to be able to bounce back from any setback to being on the edge of possible removal. The election "triumph" of December 2019 seems a long way away.

Johnson's personal ratings have fallen to an all-time low, plunging 11 points since the middle of November, a YouGov poll found last Friday.

His net favorability rating is now -42, with two-thirds of people saying they have a bad opinion of him. Less than a quarter said they have a positive one. Even 41 per cent of Conservative voters now have an unfavourable opinion of Johnson.

It may be about to get worse. In total there are allegations about seven Tory parties, quizzes and other events during the lockdown period.

At the 18 December 2020 party it now seems Jack Doyle, who was then deputy director of communications at Number 10, addressed up to 50 people at a Christmas gathering.

Then there's a leaving party on 27 November, as well as a gathering at the Department for Education on 10 December.

Then-education secretary Gavin Williamson held drinks in his department for around 24 staff and officials. All of these took place despite Covid restrictions while everyone else was subject to strict lockdown rules.

**Joking** Johnson's former aide Allegra Stratton resigned last week after footage emerged of her joking about a Christmas party at a mock press conference, days after the "alleged" event.

A video of the detestable leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg has also been leaked. He laughed about how the think-tank he was speaking for would not be investigated over a Christmas party.

After the video of Stratton emerged Johnson then said he had been "repeatedly assured" there was no party. Just in case, he asked

## BACK STORY

While the Tories partied hundreds of people died. In fact on 18 December 2020, the date of a Tory bash that was first brought to public attention, 514 people died from Covid.

- Other people faced up to £10,000 fines for having their own party

- The Metropolitan Police has said it won't investigate allegations Number 10 staff broke Covid rules in December of last year due to "an absence of evidence"

cabinet secretary Simon Case to establish "all the facts".

Initially he was set to look at the 18 December party only but after an outcry his remit had to be widened.

It's not a surprise that Johnson wants minimal interrogation. He was present for at least one of the events that we're still told didn't happen.

But Johnson's lies don't stop with parties. He stands accused of misleading his ethics adviser Lord Geidt over the redecoration of his flat.

Geidt investigated the issue in May. He exonerated Johnson of wrongdoing over an undeclared £52,000 donation to the Tories to cover the cost of a makeover to his Number 11 Downing Street residence.

## Payments

Geidt's report found that Johnson "knew nothing about such payments" until it was released in the press in February 2021.

But an Electoral Commission report revealed a WhatsApp message sent from Johnson to the donor Lord Brownlow in November 2020.

Three months before he said he knew about it, he asked his pal to approve more funds for the refurbishment.

Downing Street is arguing that Johnson knew Brownlow was overseeing organisation of funds for the refurbishment but was not aware he was the underlying donor.

Geidt needs Johnson's permission to formally reopen the case. Any changes to the report would need to be signed off by Johnson.

But even if Geidt cannot reopen his investigation, the parliamentary commissioner for standards Kathryn Stone is expected to launch an inquiry.

AS THE Tories partied in December 2020, ordinary people could not visit their relatives in care homes

## North Shropshire by-election sends fear of electoral backlash for Tories

MANY TORY MPs know Johnson is incompetent, lazy and a liar. But he had delivered election success.

They will see him differently if he is repelling voters rather than bringing them over.

On Thursday of this week a by-election was set to take place in North Shropshire which has been a Tory stronghold since the constituency was formed in 1983.

This is the seat formerly held by corrupt MP Owen Paterson—who Johnson tried to change parliamentary procedures to defend—with a majority of nearly 23,000.

Now the Liberal Democrats are favourites to win it.

Even if they don't, a close result will panic Tory MPs who see their own seats in peril. Mark Jones, a Shropshire councillor campaigning with Tory candidate Neil Shastri-Hurst told the Independent that he believes that Johnson is an obstacle to getting people to vote Conservative.

He said that Tory activists have received negative feedback about Johnson while knocking on doors.

"And I would say, if we do lose this, Johnson would have to reflect on his position."

But all this takes place with very little active intervention from the left. Johnson's fall would be a boost to everyone fighting the Tories. It's important to push to force him out.

But there won't be a general election. He will be replaced by another right wing class warrior

## Some of the North Shropshire by-election candidates

councillor, Roy Aldcroft, said, "Johnson gives the general impression that he is a buffoon and that he is not taking things seriously—and what people think of that, I am sure, will come out in the election result."

"If I do lose this, Johnson would have to reflect on his position."

But the political crisis is no credit to Labour. As Johnson's popularity slides, Starmer's net favourability rating has actually fallen from -13 to -14.

At a time of turmoil the job for the left is to seize the time and to transform what begins as a crisis of leadership into an assault on the system.

determined to attack working class people.

How Tory leaders go from office does matter.

If Johnson was facing the pressure of strikes, mass protests and riots then it would not only seal his fate but provide the basis for more change afterwards.

The political crisis is no credit to Labour. As Johnson's popularity slides, Starmer's net favourability rating has actually fallen from -13 to -14.

Instead of these basic protections, the government has

BORIS Johnson's announcement of new Covid measures this week are a crude attempt to balance the risk of the virus against that of a major Tory rebellion.

New rules insist that

inadequate "Plan B" changes have caused indignation on the Tory backbenches.

Their main focus is on the threat of so-called vaccine passports.

These hard right conservatives describe all Covid measures as "socialism", and an attack on "freedom".

They would rather that restaurants, bars and shops were filled with people spending money over the Christmas holidays.

The avoidable deaths of tens of thousands of older and more vulnerable people is a price well worth paying they say.

Johnson strives to balance the urgent need for genuine protective measures against his need for party unity.

That explains precisely why Britain has some of the worst Covid excess death figures in the world.

the Tory instinct to oppose it is based on purely commercial reasoning.

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And even they were

too much

for bosses.

Before parliament had even

passed

the

measures

top

bosses

complained

they

had

damaged

profits.

Tony Danker,

director

general

of the

bosses'

CBI

organisation,

complained

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"lockdown

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Instead, Danker wants

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**T**HE TORIES ended 2021 the way they began—by putting profits ahead of people's lives and failing over Covid.

For more than two weeks after the Omicron variant was discovered, Boris Johnson's government refused to start measures to stop it from spreading across Britain.

Instead, Danker wants the government to tell people they should be "confident in living with the virus." That means living with new variants, along with periodic rises in hospitalisations and deaths.

As the party of the rich, Tory MPs want to make sure they're on the same page. But so does Keir Starmer's Labour.

Starmer has also ended 2021 the way he began—by tailing Boris Johnson. He spent the year

## Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

# RESIST THE TORIES' COVID FAILURES NOW AND IN 2022

trying to convince bosses they can trust Labour to be in government. That was his message at Labour's conference in September and to the CBI last month.

The only time he broke from Johnson over Covid restrictions was when he demanded a plan to lift them and get back to "business as usual."

It should be up to the left and trade unions to fight Johnson and demand measures that put people's lives before profit.

There's a steadily growing pool of bitterness and resentment at the Tories' repeated mishandling of the pandemic and their corruption. But there has been no large

scale fight by trade union leaders to fight for proper protections at work, for increased sick pay, or to get Johnson out.

Some of the largest anti-government marches this year were those organised by conspiracy theorists against lockdowns and vaccinations.

The left and the trade union movement has to seize on the Tories' crisis urgently—with demonstrations, civil disobedience and strikes.

We have to begin 2022 far better than we ended 2021.

**The trade union movement has to seize on the Tories' crisis**

## CHEER END OF CAMBO OIL

**T**HE PAUSE in development of the Cambo oil field in the North Sea is a victory for climate campaigners.

Siccar Point Energy, the firm behind the oil field, said that since the withdrawal of funds from oil giant Shell, the project couldn't progress on its "original timescale".

This victory shows it's possible to push back against the fossil fuel giants and governments that support them. It should encourage more resistance.

That's not how Gary Smith,

chosen to rely almost exclusively on a planned roll out of booster jabs.

It is unlikely that the number of booster jabs will meet the "one million a week" that Johnson is aiming for.

Even if it did, there is no way the booster programme can compete with the spread of the new strain without some lockdown measures.

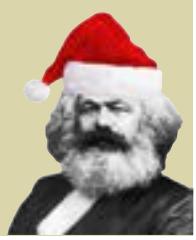
The tragedy is that neither the government nor the Labour opposition will make the argument for fear of upsetting the "business as usual" approach they are both agreed upon.

## Holiday greetings to our readers

● The next issue of Socialist Worker is due out on Wednesday 5 January 2022

● Until then check out [socialistworker.co.uk](http://socialistworker.co.uk) for reports and updates

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## ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

## West's expansion is behind threat of war

RUMOURS OF war over Ukraine abound. They started with the pro-Western Ukrainian government, which pointed to the build-up of 175,000 Russian troops on its border.

But then the US said Russia could be planning to invade Ukraine "as soon as early 2022". The foreign ministers of the G7 leading Western economies warned, "Russia should be in no doubt that further military aggression against Ukraine would have massive consequences and severe cost in response."

Almost certainly Russian president Vladimir Putin doesn't want a full-scale war. Although he has been backing low-intensity warfare by pro-Russian elements in southeastern Ukraine since 2014.

He is using the military build-up to extract diplomatic concessions from the US. Above all he wants a promise that Ukraine will not be allowed to join the Nato military alliance.

This issue goes back to the end of the Cold War in 1990-1. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet president, agreed that reunified Germany could belong to Nato. US secretary of state James Baker promised in return, "There would be no extension of Nato's jurisdiction eastwards."

This pledge was broken rapidly by US president Bill Clinton in the 1990s. The European Union (EU) and Nato were expanded in tandem to incorporate the former Soviet client states and provinces of Central and Eastern Europe.

This policy marked the US's hubris in the aftermath of the Cold War. Under article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, Nato member states are committed to defending each other from attack.

Would the US and the leading capitalist states of western Europe really go to war with Russia over, say, Latvia? Clinton was prepared to take this risk because Russia under Boris Yeltsin looked like a pushover. But when Putin took over from Yeltsin in 1999 he used booming energy revenues to rebuild Russia's military capabilities.

In April 2008 US president George W Bush encouraged a Nato summit to declare that Ukraine and Georgia would join. This would bring the US-dominated alliance to Russia's borders. Putin responded with a brutal four-day war with Georgia in August 2008.

France and Germany had already vetoed Ukraine's and Georgia's membership and they blocked any retaliatory action against Russia. But Putin's seizure of Crimea in 2014 marked a deeper polarisation between Russian and Western imperialism.

The US and EU have imposed a series of sanctions packages on Russia. The Ukrainian government is lobbying hard for military aid and Nato membership.

After a summit with Putin last week, Joe Biden made what may be an important concession. He had already ruled out military action against Russia. Now he promised to convene a summit of the US, Russia, and the European powers to discuss Putin's demand for a new security order. This went down badly with Ukraine and the central and eastern European states, who all see Nato as their shield against Russia.

### Wedded

The problem is partly that both the US and its European allies find it hard to acknowledge the legitimacy of Russia's concerns. They remain wedded to the liberal internationalist ideology that expressed the West's triumph in the Cold War.

According to this ideology, liberal capitalism binds states together economically and creates such strong common interests that war becomes unthinkable. From this point of view, Putin can be dismissed as an "authoritarian" hangover.

A small problem with this perspective is what the US denounces as "authoritarianism" rules in the most successful manufacturing and exporting economy in the world, China. It also has a growing grip on eastern EU member states.

And Putin's admirer Donald Trump occupied the White House till January, and still enjoys massive popularity.

The truth is that liberal capitalism has failed economically, as we have seen in the years since the global financial crisis exploded in 2007.

Moreover, there are plenty of serious conflicts of interest among Western states. Look at the rows between Britain and France and the close links Germany still cultivates with Russia.

Western capitals arrogantly refuse to recognise this reality, but they can't escape it.



# Rage over Met's institutional homophobia after murders

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**THE Metropolitan Police could face an inquiry into "institutional homophobia" after failing to properly investigate the murders of four gay men.**

The force's failures around serial killer Stephen Port "probably" contributed to three of the four deaths, an inquest jury found.

Port murdered Anthony Walgate, Gabriel Kovari, Daniel Whitworth and Jack Taylor between June 2014 and September 2015.

He administered fatal doses of the drug GHB and dumped their bodies near his flat in east London.

The jury said there were "fundamental failings in these investigations from the beginning" and "basic lines of inquiry were not followed".

The families of the victims have described the findings as "one of the most widespread institutional failures in modern history".

Police failed to link the deaths despite the fact that three of the men's bodies were found in a churchyard very near Port's home. The body of first victim Walgate was found outside the killer's flat.

### Dismissed

Second victim Kovari's friend John Pape repeatedly raised concerns. He said he linked the first three deaths, but was dismissed by cops.

Pape said, "The only thing that makes any sense of how disturbingly incompetent this investigation was, is prejudice.

"And if it means that the lives and deaths of young gay and bi men aren't treated with significance and respect, that amounts to institutional



Stephen Port

**PORT'S** victims Daniel Whitworth, Gabriel Kovari, Jack Taylor and Anthony Walgate (clockwise from top left)

tooth and nail to keep the homophobia question out. It was clearly the case. Anthony's investigation was shut down after two weeks."

Relatives claim police wrote the victims off as "gay druggies". Taylor's father believed "the police didn't look any further" because they had branded him a drug addict.

Officers also denied Whitworth's partner Ricky Waumsley access to his supposed "suicide note".

Waumsley said he was dismissed "in every single way because we were a gay, unmarried couple".

Postmortem injuries on Whitworth's body were attributed to "rough sex", despite a lack of forensic evidence.

When his body was found

the duty inspector described the location in an email as a "haven for gay sex (even dogging) and rough sleepers".

The Independent Office for Police Conduct said it could reopen its 2019 inquiry that handed no disciplinary action to 17 police officers investigated for misconduct.

Seven of the officers have since been promoted.

The accusation of institutional homophobia at the Met come after it was found to be institutionally corrupt by an inquiry into the Daniel Morgan murder case in June.

The Sarah Everard case showed it to be institutionally sexist earlier this year.

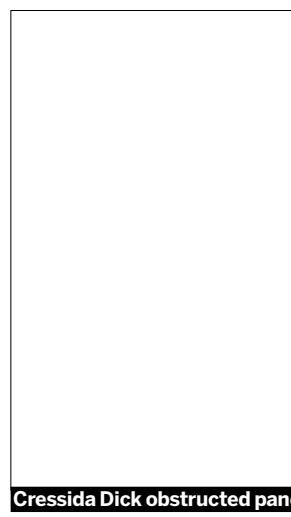
And it was already found to be institutionally racist by the Macpherson report in 1999.

## Morgan family to sue police over corruption

**THE FAMILY** of the murdered private detective Daniel Morgan are to sue the Metropolitan police for damages, over the decades-long cover-up of corruption in the case.

Daniel's killing came a week after Morgan revealed that he was taking allegations of police corruption to the News of the World.

An inquiry in June found that the Met commissioner Cressida Dick obstructed the panel appointed by the government to investigate the case. The panel ruled that the Metropolitan



Cressida Dick obstructed panel

Police was institutionally corrupt. The national police watchdog IOPC and the London mayor's police committee Mopac have yet to do anything about the panel report.

In a statement, the Daniel Morgan's family said, "The present commissioner, Cressida Dick, felt able to simply reject the panel's key finding of institutional corruption within the Metropolitan police.

"Her role in obstructing the panel's work appears to have met with indifference and worse

at the IOPC and Mopac where those charged with bringing her to answer for her role in this sorry state of affairs have shown themselves unable or unwilling to do so.

"And, in their wisdom, the home secretary and the London mayor deemed it fit to extend her term in office before the ink had dried on the panel's report."

**Simon Baskett**

### What's your story?

Email with your ideas  
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

# Tories fail even those few refugees they pledged to welcome

Schemes that were supposed to resettle Afghan refugees are grossly inadequate, says Isabel Ringrose

## THE TORIES are continuing to fail refugees—even those they proclaimed to be helping.

Home secretary Priti Patel's scheme to allow up to 20,000 Afghans to resettle in Britain over five years hasn't even begun.

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) was announced in August after the Taliban took over in Kabul.

The Tories talked up their offer to allow 5,000 refugees into Britain by the end of the year. But four months on and the scheme has not started.

A senior Whitehall source said it had been delayed because it had not received support for a launch and was destined to fail.

ACRS' website has not been updated since September, and only states the scheme "is not yet open".

Yet a government statement has claimed ACRS was "one of the most generous schemes in our country's history".

And the resources and effectiveness of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (Arap) have also been called into question.

It was revealed last week that just 84 officials have been assigned to Arap. It was launched in April to resettle people who worked for Britain in Afghanistan.

It has received more than 90,000 applications—meaning more than 1,000 per official.

## Mishandled

Evidence alleging that the government mishandled the withdrawal from Afghanistan has been handed to a parliamentary inquiry.

Details from government departments and agencies back testimony from a Foreign Office whistleblower. They claim that bureaucratic chaos, ministerial intervention and a lack of planning led to "people being left to die".

During the evacuation in August thousands of emails regarding

## BACK STORY

### Tories claimed they would help refugees from Afghanistan

- But most are stuck in hotels and report not having access to doctors or medical help
- A civil servant recently revealed that only 5 percent of the 150,000 Afghan people who asked to be evacuated were helped

urgent cases of Afghans in danger were left unread for days. This included emails to senior MPs and government ministers.

British citizens and pets belonging to a former British marine were instead prioritised in the evacuation.

The failure of Britain's "official" refugee scheme means more people have to turn to "illegal" methods to reach safety.

## Routes

But those who enter Britain "illegally", often arriving after dangerous boat crossings, are treated like criminals. And, terrible mistreatment waits the few who make it Britain alive.

A 38-week pregnant Iraqi Kurdish woman was not seen by a doctor for several weeks after crossing the Channel, despite medical complications.

Other reports say pregnant women have not been offered food or privacy from security guards while being examined.

More hotels are being taken over by the Home Office to house arrivals.

But a Refugee Council report in April said that some people placed in hotels were left unable to access basic healthcare. Needs had also been overlooked, with people with mobility problems being placed on higher floors with no lifts.

The Tories do not care about the lives or safety of refugees.



PROTESTERS RALLY for refugees in Hastings last weekend

PICTURE: HASTINGS SUTR

## Hastings solidarity rally proves that many do not fall for the racist lies

A SIGN of how many ordinary people are not taken in by Tory racism could be seen on the Sussex coast last weekend.

Over 350 people rallied in Hastings in solidarity with refugees. A coalition of organisations working together against the Nationality and Borders bill called the event.

The organisers included Hastings Supports Refugees, Hastings Community of Sanctuary, Hastings Stand Up To Racism and the Refugee Buddy Project.

Hastings has a proud tradition of welcome for people seeking refuge in Britain, so a good turnout was expected. However, numbers were swelled by the sorrow and outrage over the recent drownings of 27 people attempting to cross from France in a dinghy.

This was further intensified by exaggerated media reports of anti-refugee hostility directed at the RNLI lifeboat service.

Local speakers outlined how refugees are welcomed when they arrive at Hastings beach.

Others explained why the Nationality and Borders bill will ramp up the hostile environment for migrants.

Afghan refugee, Gulwali Passarley, said, "I became a British citizen recently but now [with a clause in the new bill] they could take away my citizenship and I wouldn't even know."

Labour councillor Maya Evans denounced capitalism for creating a world of inequality and war.

## Majority

Simon Hester, of Hastings Stand Up To Racism, described the plan to push back small boats as "a policy of social murder" and reminded people that there is an anti-racist majority in Britain.

He was cheered when he praised the RNLI for refusing to buckle under attack from figures such as Nigel Farage.

He ended his speech with a call to support the demonstration against racism in London on 19 March. He added, "In the coming months let's make Priti Patel history and make Boris Johnson regret he ever decided to play the race card."

The Nationality and Borders Bill is going through its final parliamentary stages.

Building on a law passed under the Labour government in 2006,

it will allow the home secretary to withdraw citizenship from anyone they believe can access citizenship of another country.

Even if they have not gained that citizenship, they could therefore be rendered stateless.

In addition, the home secretary does not have to inform the targeted person in advance. This makes challenge far harder.

Other clauses of the bill will criminalise those who help refugees and repel refugees who do not arrive through legal channels—which are impossible except for a tiny number of people.

Meanwhile, the French *Le Monde* newspaper has corroborated survivors' reports from the drowning of 27 people.

They confirm that the desperate people called British and French rescue services but were refused help.

People were left in the Channel for ten hours before they were found—too late for most.

# US army knowingly bombed civilians

Drone strikes ordered by a special unit in Iraq and Syria killed civilians—and top military bosses knew all about it, reports Charlie Kimber

**A MURDEROUS US special forces cell called Talon Anvil massacred hundreds of civilians in Iraq and Syria—and top officers systematically covered up its crimes.**

The cell controlled a fleet of Predator and Reaper drones that bristled with Hellfire missiles and laser-guided bombs.

A major investigation by the New York Times newspaper says Talon Anvil killed “people who had no role in the conflict—farmers trying to harvest, children in the street, families fleeing fighting, and villagers sheltering in buildings”.

A former Air Force intelligence officer said he saw so many civilian deaths as a result of Talon Anvil’s tactics that he eventually grew jaded and accepted them as part of the job.

But some attacks stood out.

In one, Talon Anvil followed three men, all with canvas bags working in an olive grove near the city of Manbij in Syria in autumn 2016.

The men had no weapons, but the strike cell insisted they must be enemy fighters and killed them with a missile.

Then in March 2017, Talon Anvil sent a Predator drone over a Syrian farming town called Karama.

## Typed

A Talon Anvil operator typed a message into the chat room the cell shared with intelligence analysts—“all civilians have fled the area.”

“Anyone left is an enemy fighter. Find lots of targets for us today because we want to go Winchester”.

“Going Winchester” meant using all of the drone’s missiles and 500-pound bombs.

A Predator drone dropped a 500-pound bomb through the roof of a building.

As the smoke cleared, the former officer said his team “stared at their screens in dismay”.

“The infrared cameras showed

## BACK STORY

Talon Anvil, a US special forces cell, murdered hundreds of civilians in Iraq and Syria and top army officials covered up its crimes

- Talon Anvil’s victims included farmers, children, families fleeing fighting and villagers sheltering
- Talon Anvil officially never existed, but was a unit within the larger Task Force 9
- The horrors caused show how imperialism creates terror and mass death

women and children staggering out of the partly collapsed building, some missing limbs, some dragging the dead.

During the US-backed attack on Raqqa, Iraq, in June 2017, civilians tried to flee the fighting and “boarded makeshift ferries to cross the Euphrates River.”

The cell ordered strikes that hit multiple boats, “killing at least 30 civilians”.

Instead of ending their murders, Talon Anvil operators “started directing drone cameras away from targets shortly before a strike hit, preventing the collection of video evidence”.

Talon Anvil, which officially never existed, was a unit within the larger Task Force 9.

It coordinated US military operations in Iraq and Syria from 2014 to 2019.

The Times reported last month that Task Force 9’s atrocities included an air strike on the town of Baghuz.

At least 80 women and children were incinerated by 500-pound and 2,000-pound bombs.

All these horrors were known by people at the top of the military.

They took no action because this is how imperialism works—through terror, mass death and contempt for those it has targeted.

**RUINS IN the Syrian city of Raqqa after US air strikes**

## INDIA

# Farmers celebrate win over Modi’s laws

AFTER DEFEATING the right-wing Narendra Modi, the Indian farmers partied non-stop at their camps on the borders of the capital Delhi. They had been there for more than one year.

Before beginning the celebrations, they paid tributes to the dead and all who have been arrested or suffered.

Then dancing started and they were showered from a small airplane

with flower petals. On Saturday they left for their homes in convoys of cars, jeeps and tractors.

The convoys to Punjab were met by people lining the roads singing and dancing lining, providing them with free food and drinks.

Protests against hated farm laws started in the Punjab about 18 months ago.

Punjabi farmers marched on Delhi

and were joined by farmers from surrounding states.

Police attacked the farmers and supported the ruling BJP party and fascists who also attacked the camps. But the united farmers drove them out.

Indian farmers have set an example not only for the Indian workers but for all around the world.

**Balwinder Rana**

## COVID

# China and US use vaccines in power play

**SUPPLYING VACCINES to the world’s poorest countries has become a new fault line in inter-imperialist rivalry.**

Less than a week ago Nicaragua, in Central America, became the latest country to cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan in favour of China.

Just days after, Nicaragua received a huge shipment of Chinese Covid vaccines.

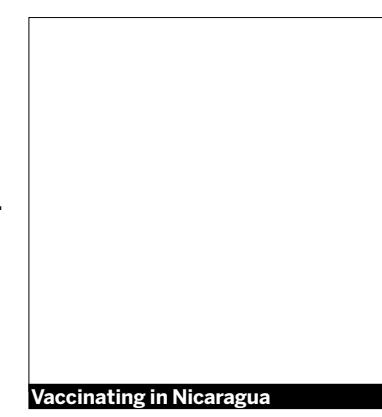
The country is desperate for more doses as only 38 percent of its population is so far fully vaccinated.

**The news came as the US state department called for countries to “expand engagement with Taiwan”.**

In a riposte, China said that any country wanting formal diplomatic relations with it must renounce ties with Taiwan.

The Chinese ruling class is using the offer of vaccines to expand its political influence.

US president Joe Biden has been pushing for a loosening of intellectual property rights on vaccines so the US can complete.



Vaccinating in Nicaragua

## Stand with the Durham students

IT'S IMPORTANT everyone stands in solidarity with Durham university students and staff who recently faced a transphobic, racist and misogynist speech by Rod Liddle at Durham University's South College Christmas dinner.

Liddle claimed the left railed against "science or pure facts", saying "a person with an X and a Y chromosome, that has a long, dangling penis, is scientifically a man, and that is pretty much, scientifically, the end of the story".

He went on to say, "It is fairly easily proven that colonialism is not remotely the major cause of Africa's problems, just as it is very easy to prove that the educational underachievement of British people of Caribbean descent or African Americans is nothing to do with institutional or structural racism".

Students who chose to leave in protest before or during the dinner were then verbally attacked by the principal and his wife.

After the speech, a few students shouted "disgusting" and "racist" at Liddle as he walked out of the venue.

That evening, a Stonewall "Some people are trans. Get over it" poster was stuck to the door of the principal's office.

The right to object to and protest against invited speakers and the positions they represent is itself an exercise of free speech.

**Laurel Forrest**  
Birmingham

## Precarious workers need the same laws as the EU

SOMETIMES THE European Union (EU) delivers gains.

Companies that operate in the EU such as Uber, Gorillas and Deliveroo are soon to face new laws.

They will have to give workers the minimum wage, access to sick pay, holidays and other employment rights.

The European Commission said the burden of proof on employment status would shift to companies, rather than the individuals that work for them.

Maybe the laws will be watered down in the



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

## NHS workers say the Tories are lying to us and laughing at us

WE REMEMBER 18 December 2020, but not because we were at a party.

It was the day that one of our co-workers became very ill from Covid-19. She now has symptoms of long Covid and has never returned to work.

All of us in the NHS have been through nearly two years of hell.

We have faced the lack of protective PPE, the inadequate masks, the crushing workloads and the everyday fear that we would be infected and pass Covid on to our loved ones.

We have fought over some things, and accepted others because we wanted to keep giving a service to our patients.

And the public clapping wasn't followed by the pay rise we had been hoping for as the most basic

compensation. But there was plenty of cash for the Tory donors and ministers' friends who made money by grabbing public contracts.

As if that wasn't enough of an insult, we now know that the measures we all had to observe were just ignored at a series of Tory parties.

As others have said, the Tories are not just lying to us, they are laughing at us as well.

Boris Johnson pretended he was grateful to the health workers who had saved his life. It was all a front, he never thought about NHS workers at all.

Perhaps Johnson will not survive this. He certainly deserves to go, and to go quickly.

But that won't sweep clean the whole way that government acts. It's time for much more

far-reaching change, and to keep fighting for our NHS.

**Three NHS workers**  
London

● A STUDENT paramedic last week posted a video of 22 ambulances queuing outside my local hospital in Devon.

He said he waited at the back of the queue at Torbay hospital where the ambulances did not move for six hours.

He added, "Staff are broken, the hospital is full. This is not sustainable. Patients are being affected and so are staff. The NHS in south Devon just broke. There was time to fix this, I don't think so anymore."

I am genuinely scared.

**Mark Willard**  
Devon

## Kellogg bosses want mass scabbing

THERE'S A crucial working class battle taking place in the United States.

The Kellogg cereal company has said it is reacting to workers rejecting a deal to end a strike by saying it will permanently replace 1,400 workers who have been on strike since October.

It's ruthless union busting. If they get away with it, the bosses hope it will be a brake on the growing strike movement in the country.

Kellogg workers at four plants have bravely said they don't want a deal that will clear the way to mass employment of workers on

previous contract, the lower tier could include up to 30 percent of workers.

Now the company wants to take off that limit.

There's a new spirit in the US. We've seen good strikes and last month the teamsters' union elected a president who challenged the candidate backed by the union's departing president, James P Hoffa.

Teamsters felt the union had been too willing to accept concessions under Hoffa's leadership.

If you work for Kellogg in Britain, get behind the US workers.

**Joe Hazelhurst**  
Chicago, via Facebook

Just a thought...

## Starmer's one of the elite

KEIR Starmer on 9 December—  
"Congratulations to Carrie and Boris Johnson on the birth of their daughter."

"Wishing your family health and happiness."

Couldn't he just keep quiet? Does he have to betray quite so clearly that for Labour, although there are differences with the Tories, it's all one big friendly club?

**Janet Baines**  
On Facebook

## Royals invited a paedophile

COULD THE royals go any lower?

A court in the US last week saw a picture of paedophile Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell relaxing at the queen's Balmoral residence.

The image is thought to have been taken in 1999, when prince Andrew reportedly invited the couple to stay at the Scottish estate.

What a foul world this reveals.

**Simon Fisher**  
On Facebook

## MPs wanted Johnson win

ONE IMPORTANT thing to remember as Boris Johnson crashes and burns is that probably a majority of Labour MPs actually preferred him becoming prime minister rather than Jeremy Corbyn.

They preferred an incompetent, corrupt Tory government to a left wing government even though its domestic programme was at best "moderate".

The same is true of the Guardian newspaper.

This must not be forgotten.

**John Newsinger**  
Brighton

## Take heart from Serbia

THOUSANDS of demonstrators blocked major roads across Serbia recently over a government-backed plan to allow mining company Rio Tinto to extract lithium.

Who says we can't win workers to fight over the environment?

**Louise Westwood**  
Manchester

# RETAIL AND DISTRIBUTION WORKERS SPEAK OUT

# XMAS SHOP FLOOR HELL

**T'S CHRISTMAS time and the stores are heaving, packed with people desperate to buy presents and escape the crush. The checkout queues stretch out of the door into the cold, but inside temperatures are rising.**

people in these roles. These conditions aren't helped by packed shops, high tensions and annoying Christmas adverts played on loop.

Con is a retail assistant at Primark in North London.

They told Socialist Worker, "Returns rails are building up, queues are growing. And the shop is untidy."

"And we're getting stressed because it's hot, crowded, and customers don't listen about masks."

And, tomorrow it will all start again—with the same lame Christmas songs, the demanding managers and the stressed out customers."

Sales during this year's Christmas period are projected to hit £84.7 billion, with the average adult spending almost £550 on gifts.

Retail and distribution workers face surging Covid infections and an increasing cost of living.

Low pay and poor conditions are common, resulting in many companies being understaffed, unable to fill temporary Christmas positions.

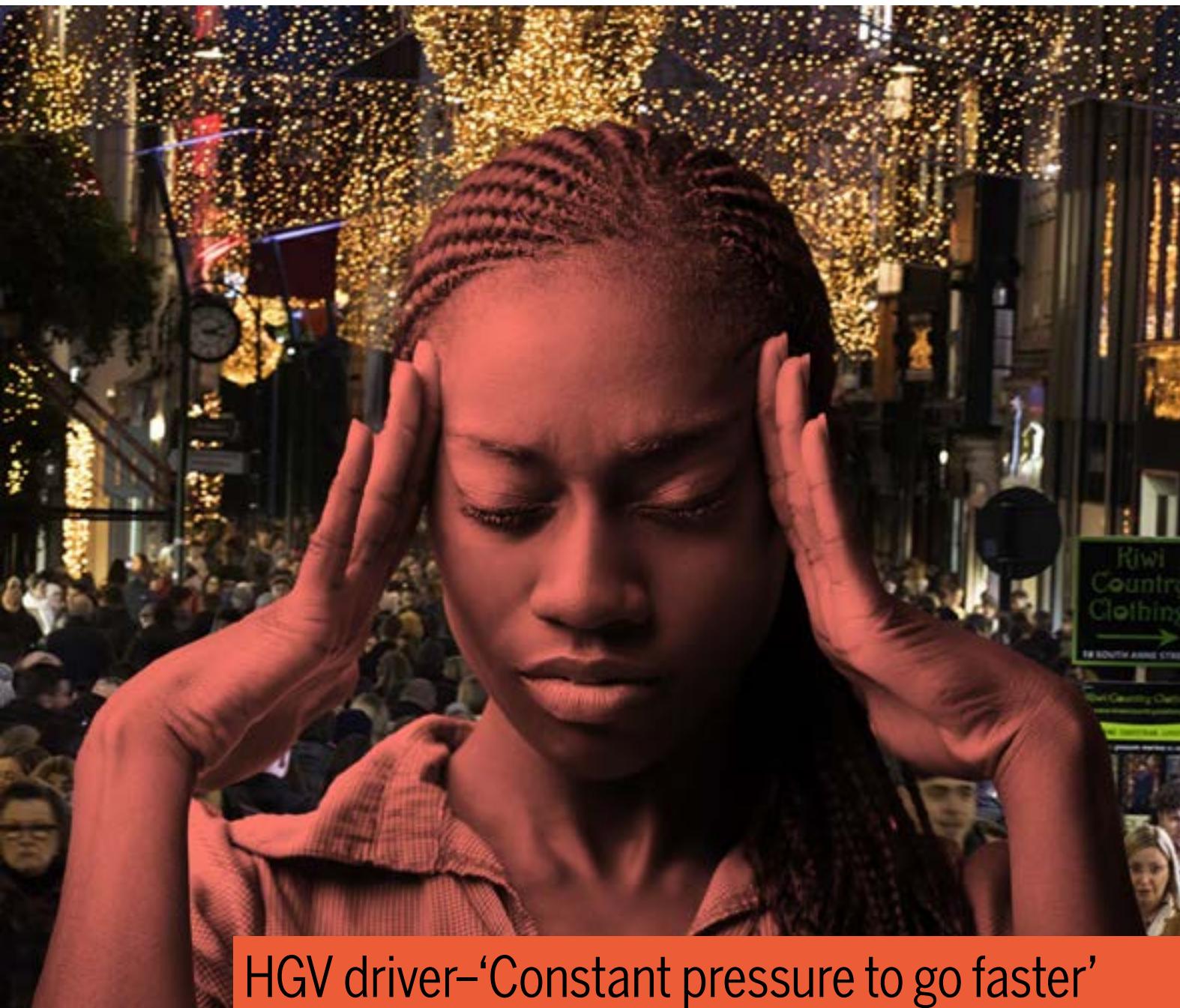
This year Sainsbury's hopes to employ an extra 22,000 temporary staff and 7,000 vacancies are available at John Lewis and Waitrose.

Online marketplace Amazon is hoping to gain 20,000 temporary workers in Britain.

But poor and often dangerous working conditions are common for the



**At Primark we're getting stressed because it's hot and customers don't want to wear masks**



## HGV driver—'Constant pressure to go faster'

**AL IS an HGV driver for a company based in North London.**

He told Socialist Worker, "Most drivers are expected to work longer for Christmas, so I know the stress far too well. I've spent many Christmases driving."

"The company I work for relies on temporary, seasonal contract work in preparation for Christmas."

"The issue with these contracts is that rather than working directly with the distributor you're working for lots of different people who, when something goes wrong all try to blame each other."

"Most of the time the driver gets blamed for being late despite traffic and the roads being worse this time of year and we are legally required to take breaks."

Drivers are required to take 45-minute breaks every four and a half hours. New technology in a lot of lorries records bad driving and speeding which can result in the driver being sacked.

Al said despite this, "There's a pressure from managers to go faster, take fewer breaks. But we can't do that or we risk losing our jobs—it's a lose-lose situation."

Al recently moved into this job nine months ago. He had

pay rises because "Covid showed how important drivers are".

He said, "Everything moved online and the only way people were getting the things they needed was through delivery, so we were important to everyone."

"Drivers aren't going to accept anything happening to their wages, they can get a job elsewhere."

In October the bosses' Road Haulage Association found from a survey of its members that there is a shortage of more than 100,000 qualified drivers in Britain.

A major reason for this is European drivers, who previously worked in Britain emigrating. Hard borders and Covid have also limited the number coming to Britain.

The reliance on a limited pool of HGV drivers has allowed some unionised drivers to win significant pay rises.

Tanker drivers in Liverpool secured a 17.5 percent rise and GKO drivers won a 23 percent pay increase.

These victories show that taking action and being willing to strike is the way to win decent pay and turn the tables.

Al believes the reason for the

**'Some of us are working 60-hour weeks, and that's now become normal'**

**STEVE** is a sales assistant at a Majestic Wines branch in London.

ACCORDING TO Steve, unlike most other shops and businesses throughout the pandemic, "the workload increased as people couldn't get alcohol from the pubs or restaurants".

A typical day for him includes answering the phone, stocking shelves and customer service. This can be "stressful" and "exhausting", he said.

For the past two years Majestic Wines sales assistants have been given just a one percent annual pay rise. Steve pointed out that, "Compared to inflation, that's essentially a pay cut."

"Our delivery drivers have had their pay increased much more, it's still not enough but whenever I've asked they're quiet about it. I'm guessing they've been told by management not to tell us."

"But it shows profits are through the roof and they can probably afford to give us a pay rise also."

Steve caught Covid but believes that at the time his workplace had very good safety restrictions. "But

that's all gone now, there are no limits," he added.

Because of this, like most retail workers, he dreads working over the much busier Christmas period.

"We're now all working harder and expected to work overtime," he said. "Some of us are working 60 hour weeks and that's normal."

"Usually working harder is recognised with a bonus. But managers use bonuses and high staffing levels as an excuse to freeze pay and offer low pay rises."

### Union

"We have sold 30 percent more stock this week compared to the same time last year. But we still missed out on our bonus targets because they were increased."

Steve argues for the presence of a strong union where workers can organise to fight for more.

"We're not unionised, I think I'm the only union member," he said. "Usdaw doesn't have a presence here, I've never seen them."

"Come April people will be pissed off with another low pay rise. No workplace organisation makes it impossible to fight for more."

**'I haven't had a single good day since I started working at Amazon two months ago'**

AMAZON'S BLACK Friday sales in Britain raked in £2 billion. But this fortune was built off the back of the poor treatment of workers.

Amazon managers use cameras and technology that monitors and tracks workers to ensure peak efficiency. The demands on workers are so high some have reported urinating in bottles and wearing nappies.

A recent investigation led by the Mirror found that 1,000 ambulances have been called to Amazon fulfilment centres since 2018.

"So managers definitely put more pressure onto me."

Michael didn't notice a huge change leading into the Christmas period because "every part of the job is pretty stressful".

He added, "This is made harder because, I would say, management wants you to work way harder so you don't work long hours and get paid more."

Michael didn't notice a huge change leading into the Christmas period because "every part of the job is pretty stressful".

He added, "This is made harder because, I would say, management wants you to work way harder so you don't work long hours and get paid more."

"So managers definitely put more pressure onto me."

Michael and his colleagues could be threatened with repercussions or job losses for trying to work quicker.

**Faster**

"Driving faster is a huge no because that results in infractions," he said.

"Drivers rarely take breaks because there aren't enough workers and there isn't enough time to have a break."

Michael explained how working for a huge company and the hierarchy that's imposed means all of the people he works with are "stressed out".

He added, "I think if they paid more, people would have an easier time with all the shit they have to do, but fixing it is impossible."

"Millions of people are going to

**WHAT WE STAND FOR**

**These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.**

**INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION**

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

**REVOLUTION NOT REFORM**

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

**THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD**

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

**INTERNATIONALISM**

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

**THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602

# Socialist Workers Party online meetings

## Prospects for socialists in 2022

<b>BIRMINGHAM</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 281-634-5938	<b>CARDIFF</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 630-181-4857	<b>EDINBURGH</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 431-459-112	<b>LEEDS</b> Thu 13 Jan, 6pm 881-4770-0676	<b>LONDON:SOUTH EAST</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 529-913-6390	<b>OXFORD &amp; THAMES VALLEY</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 861-2001-6477
<b>BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE &amp; STAFFORDSHIRE</b> Wed 12 Jan, 8pm 914-9548-1031	<b>CHESTERFIELD</b> Thu 12 Jan, 7pm 828-532-8731	<b>GLASGOW</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 879-2402-3259	<b>LIVERPOOL</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 493-925-5919	<b>LONDON:TOWER HAMLETS</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 818-391-0420	<b>PORTSMOUTH</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 488-934-2809
<b>BOURNEMOUTH</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 825-4209-2711	<b>COLCHESTER</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 466-478-2013	<b>HARLOW</b> 13 Jan, 7.30pm 832-8746-7480	<b>LONDON:HACKNEY</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 854-8245-8715	<b>LONDON:WALTHAM FOREST</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 543-023-057	<b>SHEFFIELD &amp; SOUTH YORKSHIRE</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 528-174-9278
<b>BRADFORD</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 885-9187-7552	<b>COVENTRY</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 823-945-1917	<b>HASTINGS</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 880-5464-3685	<b>LONDON:HARINGEY</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 459-388-1576	<b>LONDON:WEST AND NORTH WEST</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 861-9481-1795	<b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 381-513-5080
<b>BRIGHTON &amp; HOVE</b> Thu 13 Jan, 6.30pm 874-3262-3749	<b>DEVON &amp; CORNWALL</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 865-2972-2883	<b>HOME COUNTIES</b> Thu 13 Jan, 6.30pm 834 117 0703	<b>LONDON:ISLINGTON</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 874-012-7970	<b>MANCHESTER</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.15pm 323-178-7151	<b>SWANSEA &amp; WEST WALES</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 902-964-963
<b>BRISTOL</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 688-397-3148	<b>DORSET</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 706-382-3359	<b>HUDDERSFIELD</b> Wed 12 Jan, 6.30pm 290-168-1804	<b>LONDON:NEWHAM</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 288-098-8827	<b>NEWCASTLE</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 368-595-2712	<b>WIGAN</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 872-5136-9540
<b>BURNLEY &amp; PENDLE</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 738 949 2405	<b>DUNDEE, ABERDEEN &amp; PERTH</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7.30pm 894-2628-7708	<b>KENT</b> Thu 13 Jan, 8.15pm 434-623-8064	<b>LONDON:SOUTH</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 497-196-1801	<b>NORWICH</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 906-652-5299	<b>YORK &amp; SCARBOROUGH</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 827-489-7492
<b>CAMBRIDGE</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7.30pm 681-800-4408	<b>EAST MIDLANDS</b> Wed 12 Jan, 7pm 354-874-4790	<b>LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE</b> Thu 13 Jan, 7pm 992-204-9372			

**BRADFORD**  
**After the coup—resistance and revolution in Sudan**

Thu 6 Jan,  
7pm  
885-9187-7552

**CARDIFF**  
**Why we hate Mondays—Marxism & alienation**

Wed 5 Jan, 7.30pm  
630-181-4857

**CHESTERFIELD**  
**Environmental crisis and the myth of overpopulation**

Thu 6 Jan, 7pm  
828-532-8731

**HARLOW**  
**Fight the Nationality and Borders Bill—the case against immigration controls**

Thu 6 Jan, 7.30pm  
832-8746-7480

**HUDDERSFIELD**  
**No to fortress Europe—why socialists oppose all borders**

Wed 5 Jan,  
6.30pm  
290-168-1804

**LONDON—HACKNEY**  
**50 years of British Asian struggles**

Thu 6 Jan, 7.30pm  
854-8245-8715

**TELFORD**  
**Capitalism, exploitation and economic crisis**

791-7178-2356  
Thu 6 Jan,  
7.30pm

**Roy Fletcher Centre**  
**Cross Hill**  
**Shrewsbury**

SY1 1JE  
914-9548-1031

**WIGAN**  
**China, the Uyghurs and the left**

Thu 6 Jan,  
7pm  
872-5136-9540

**WOLVERHAMPTON & WALSALL**  
**Tories, Covid & corruption**

Wed 5 Jan,  
7.30pm  
914-9548-1031

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The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Occasionally branches will hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.



# Stresses of restaurant life make for absorbing cinema

A single shot tells an increasingly tense story on a high-end restaurant's busiest night—making Boiling Point a taut watch, writes **Stephen Philip**

**THIS ABSORBING, tense drama from upcoming director Philip Barantini is utterly engaging as we find ourselves fully immersed in the minutiae of restaurant life.**

It works best at the more everyday events than its moments of high drama.

Chef Andy Jones (Stephen Graham) barrels in to a chic east London restaurant, stressed out and babbling, swigging excessively from a flask with suspicious relish.

The first order of the day is to placate the health and safety inspector who's made a surprise visit.

Documentary style, the camera tracks behind Andy. He struggles with the juggling act one can expect in a top end restaurant, complete with frantic-paced demands, diverse staff, and a dilettante manager.

The camera prowls across the restaurant, capturing the continual simmering of everyday stresses and strains associated with modern restaurant life. Impressively, it's all done in one continuous long take.

## Critic

It's not long before the chef has even more on his plate. Andy finds himself wholly unprepared when his ex-business partner, a celebrity TV chef, Alistair Sky (Jason Flemyng) pays an impromptu visit. In tow is a top restaurant critic, which is enough to send Andy into a panic.

Not fully knowing Alistair's agenda does nothing for Andy's stress levels.

Serving up culinary perfection can only be realised through the collective efforts of a cohesive team. But this harmony is not easily achievable when some feel they are not properly recognised and respected for the



TENSIONS BUBBLE beneath the surface between head chef Andy and Carly, who props him up

work they do. Better pay and effective management of their workload would help. But Andy is falling apart and it's all about to hit the proverbial fan.

Carly (Vinette Robinson) gives a cracking performance as a talented chef who feels she's propped up Andy one too many times. Perhaps it's the right moment to head off for pastures new, where there's higher pay.

The grill chef is also ready to let rip at Andy for letting the side down. Then there's the pregnant dishwasher, infuriated by a lazy co-worker, who's too busy being charming, or smoking weed.

We even see the near fatality of a

customer, owing to Andy's careless supervision of a trainee French chef, who's struggling to understand the rapid delivery of Andy's accent.

The camera keeps probing, discovering obnoxious customers. Laddish Instagram influencers insist they want an off-menu steak. A newly affluent bigoted patriarch dishes out nastiness to a black waiter.

The technique of using one continuous take to follow the turbulence of restaurant life proves strangely compelling. It brilliantly captures the simple rhythm of food preparation, snatched conversations and clashes among staff.

It's not quite a microcosm of capitalism. But it does give voice to the issues surrounding working as a cooperative endeavour—individualism versus responsibilities to the collective.

Boiling Point's lower key register of an observational storytelling style is arguably in tension with the higher stakes plotting.

But the whole is held together by the ever reliable and brilliant Stephen Graham, the convincing cast and its exhilarating momentum.

Boiling Point is in cinemas from Wednesday 29 December

One anti-war activist's recollection of the landmark mass movement

## BOOK

### STOP THE WAR—A SNAPSHOT

By Andrew Burgin. £10 from [bit.ly/BurginBook](http://bit.ly/BurginBook)

**SOCIALIST ACTIVIST** Andrew Burgin has produced a snapshot of the Stop the War movement.

Packed with photographs of the movement's events and protests it has the feel of one person's involvement in the movement from the very beginning. Burgin gives the views of someone who was an officer of the Stop the War Coalition.



The cover of Andrew Burgin's book

## Dubai's super rich—and those who work for them

### DOCUMENTARY

#### INSIDE DUBAI—PLAYGROUND OF THE RICH

Starts Monday 3 January, 9pm BBC2 and then on BBC iPlayer

DRENCHED IN luxury and excess, this new series reveals what it's like to live in the desert-paradise of Dubai, an ultra-modern tax haven for the super-rich.

The city now counts 52,000 millionaires and billionaires

among its three million inhabitants.

We meet Sonya, whose wardrobe is worth £4 million, Abu, whose car number plate is worth £7 million, and Money Kicks, a teenage billionaire who loves wrapping supercars.

As well as looking at the opulence of the desert metropolis in the UAE, the series examines what life is like for people who work for the mega rich and keep the city moving.

## RADIO

### MOOMINLAND MIDWINTER

Saturday 25 December, 11am on Radio 4

**MOOMINTROLL** wakes in the middle of winter, when the rest of his family are hibernating, and Moominvalley is deep in snow.

Anxious and alone, he is forced to venture out into a frozen world. He has to find new friends, cope with new dangers, and learn to live in a new and hostile environment.

Gradually he learns to accept the strange and sometimes frightening conditions in which he finds himself. When refugees arrive fleeing the cold, will he do the right thing, or is it all a bit much?

## RADIO

### MOOMIN CREATOR TOVE JANSSON

Tuesday 21 December, 11am, BBC Radio 4 Extra and also on BBC Sounds

**TOVE JANSSON** was a literary phenomenon who lead a fascinating life.

She became famous the 1960s for a series of illustrated children's books centred on the Moomintrolls. This family of hippo-like creatures lived in the forest, exploring all that nature had to offer.

It was a heavily autobiographical creation, though shaped by a great deal of wish fulfilment. The Moomins' relatively happy family was a significant improvement on her own.

Her dad had a low opinion of women, and fascist leanings. In contrast, she was very close to her mum, but described the relationship as like "living together under a bell jar".

Developed during the Second World War, while Jansson lived under a Nazi-sympathising regime in Finland, the Moomins are celebrated for challenging social norms. One aspect of this is the inclusion of characters based on Tove and her female partner—at a time when homosexuality was still illegal.

For the first 15 years of her working life Tove was best known as a satirical cartoonist. But the Moomins eclipsed all that, spawning theme parks and merchandise—and making her a fortune. But they also dominated her life.

She came to hate them.

This documentary is a gentle exploration of her life and work. But it skates over some of the darker aspects and episodes of her life.

Ben Windsor

**T**HIRTY YEARS ago the red flag was lowered for the last time over the Moscow Kremlin as the Soviet Union collapsed on 25 December 1991.

Most of the left saw it as a defeat for socialism.

But Socialist Worker argued it was "a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing". A front page celebrated the breakup of the Soviet Union, saying, "Communism has collapsed—now fight for real socialism."

The Soviet Union claimed to be a socialist state. Its constitution said "all power belongs to working people", who wielded it through workers' councils that had taken power during the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In reality, the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe were "state capitalist" societies, where workers had no control.

Dictator Joseph Stalin and his successors built up a brutal dictatorship marked by exploitation and oppression.

This wasn't the inevitable result of the Russian Revolution. It had shown the potential of workers running society without bosses, bankers and landlords.

The working class, in alliance with the peasantry, had seized power in October 1917.

**T**HE bedrock was a much more thorough-going democracy than under capitalism based on workers' councils—"soviets", the Russian word for council. Workers controlled key workplaces while landowners' estates were broken up and handed to peasants.

Decades before the vast majority of capitalist countries such as Britain brought in mild reforms, Russia decriminalised homosexuality. Women were guaranteed the right to divorce and abortion on demand.

Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik party, which had given leadership to the revolution, argued it had to spread internationally to survive.

Unfortunately, a wave of revolt unleashed by the Russian Revolution failed to break through. At the same time 14 imperialist powers, including Britain, invaded Russia and fought alongside the Whites who wanted to restore the old Tsarist order.

The Red Army, led by Leon Trotsky, repelled the invaders and destroyed the White armies by 1922.

But the Russian Civil War had a devastating impact. It decimated the working class.

But the Bolshevik party found itself in charge of a state bureaucracy. During the 1920s its size and power grew—with



A PRO-DEMOCRACY protester pulls a soldier from a tank during the attempted coup in Moscow, 1991

# FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

On the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tomáš Tengely-Evans argues the event wasn't a defeat for socialists. The lessons learnt are valuable for socialists today in their fight for "real socialism"

Stalin as general secretary. In a total break with the Bolsheviks, he formulated the idea of "socialism in one country", claiming under his leadership socialism was possible without world revolution.

By the end of the decade, the bureaucracy was transforming itself into a new ruling class.

In 1928 a combination of imperialist pressures and internal crisis pushed Stalin to adopt the first Five Year Plan.

It aimed to force through rapid industrialisation by squeezing the working class.

To do so Stalin unleashed a full-blooded counter revolution

**“**  
**Stalin built up a brutal dictatorship marked by exploitation and oppression**

Joseph Stalin

reinvest their profits into new technology and squeeze more out of workers to grab a bigger chunk of profit than rivals.

This leads, as Marx put it, to a system of "accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake".

**T**HE SOVIET Union was marked by the first division between workers and the means of production. The subordination of the working class was at the heart of Stalinist labour laws.

One Communist Party central committee resolution from September 1929 made clear managers' orders are "unconditionally binding on his subordinate administrative staff and on all workers".

But what about the second division?

Viewed in isolation, the Soviet Union wasn't marked by it as there was no market competition inside the Stalinist economies.

But this changes when we look at the Soviet Union in the context of imperialism, a global system of competing capitalist states. It was locked into military and economic competition with Western capitalist states.

This competition meant the bureaucracy behaved in the same way as a capitalist firm. Its aim was capital accumulation on the backs of workers.

After the Second World War, the Soviet Union forced the state capitalist model onto Eastern Europe.

Other officially "socialist" countries, such as China and Cuba, adopted forms of state capitalism.

Imperialist competition intensified during the Cold War.

By the time of Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc's rulers were staring at a crisis.

The bureaucracy had successfully built up heavy industry in the 1930s.

It had done so by increasing "labour productivity"—squeezing more out of workers—through brutal repression. But relying on terror to increase labour productivity was hitting its limits.

And modern capitalist development requires a healthy and educated workforce to move beyond an initial phase of industrial development.

This crisis caused splits between Stalin's henchmen after his death. Eventually, Nikita Khrushchev managed to grab the top job promising reforms.

He launched a full-scale attack on Stalin's "cult of personality" at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956.

Capitalists exploit workers to get their hands on profits, but they don't do it just because they're greedy. This is where the second division—among capitalists themselves—kicks in. Competition forces firms to

just as willing to use repression when the bureaucracy's rule was threatened.

As class societies, the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc were marked by class struggle just like the West.

Workers in Czechoslovakia and East Germany had already risen in 1953 against assaults on their living standards.

And now Khrushchev's speech caused ideological turmoil in the Stalinist states and ordinary people began to question their rulers.

Workers rebelled in Poland and Hungary in 1956. The "reformer" Khrushchev's response? Send in tanks to crush the Hungarian workers' revolution.

The Soviet Union saw impressive growth rates during the 1950s and 1960s. But internal growth wasn't enough to overcome the constant pressure for more capital accumulation.

It continually crashed against the limits of capital accumulation set by its national economy. And the Soviet Union's backwardness meant the Cold War arms race placed a particularly heavy burden on its economy.

dicatorships of Eastern Europe.

And in 1991 the Soviet Union itself collapsed after a failed coup against Gorbachev by conservative sections of the bureaucracy.

But the old ruling class did its best to hang on to its class power.

The political setup changed, but social relations between bosses and workers didn't. Communist politicians became "democratic" politicians.

The managers of state-owned companies became the managers and sometimes owners of newly privatised companies.

In some Stalinist countries, opposition movements and capitalist newcomers were part of the new setup.

But whether the new states were ruled by "reformed" Stalinists, liberal democrats or a combination of the two, the governments all accepted the logic of global capitalism. They pursued vicious free market policies.

But the attempts at reform were too little, too late. And their inability to solve the crisis provoked further splits and unleashed forces at the base of society who began openly questioning their rule.

In 1989 a revolutionary wave swept away the Stalinist

## READ MORE

### State Capitalism in Russia

by Tony Cliff  
[bit.ly/3rXWkDw](https://bit.ly/3rXWkDw)

### Half socialist? Leon Trotsky and the Soviet Union

by John Rose  
[isj.org.uk/half-socialist](https://isj.org.uk/half-socialist)

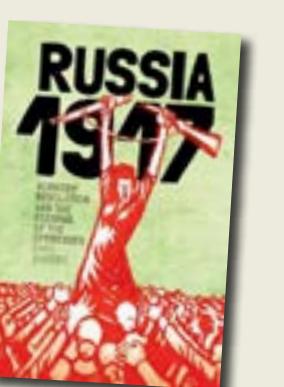
### Stalin's Terror of 1937-38

by Frederick S. Choate and Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin  
[bit.ly/3oK52Dz](https://bit.ly/3oK52Dz)

### Russia 1917 - Workers' Revolution and the Festival of the Oppressed

by Dave Sherry  
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## ANALYSIS

Peru's poor put their hopes in Castillo, and now they are angry

Just a few months ago workers cheered the election of a radical president in Peru. Fewer are happy now, says Sophie Squire

WHEN PEDRO Castillo became president of Peru in July, he promised widespread change in the Latin American country.

But since beating right winger Keiko Fujimori by a slim majority, the former union leader has moved rapidly rightwards.

A collection of right wing parties last week put a motion to impeach Castillo before congress.

They accused him of corruption and incompetence.

The president has tried to reassure the state that he will not move against it, and uses every opportunity to command the military.

He even argued that the role of the army was essential to "exit the economic crisis" and for "strengthening our social agenda".

While Castillo has done everything to appease the right and the bosses, he has done very little to keep the promises he made to ordinary people during his election campaign.

In the Ayacucho region, a large section of the population voted for Castillo, but that hasn't stopped big demonstrations against him.

Protesters blocked roads to demand Castillo uphold an agreement to shut several mines in the region.

Castillo promised an end to government corruption, the nationalisation of natural resources and the dismantling of neoliberalism. But since coming to power, he has all but abandoned this project.

There are important lessons to be learnt from what has happened in Peru.

Chile was set to choose on 19 December between a far right fan of the dictator Augusto Pinochet and a left wing former student leader as president.

But whether in Peru, Chile or Bolivia, socialism will come through parliament.

The working class across Latin America have proven to be a powerful force. Only they hold the power to dismantle neoliberalism and bring the system down for good.

## Castillo has abandoned plans to nationalise resources

# Lobby of liars links politicians with the media

by SIMON BASKETTER

ONE BY-PRODUCT of the Downing Street Christmas parties scandal is that it has thrown the cosy relationship between politicians and political journalists into the spotlight.

Journalists attended at least one of the parties.

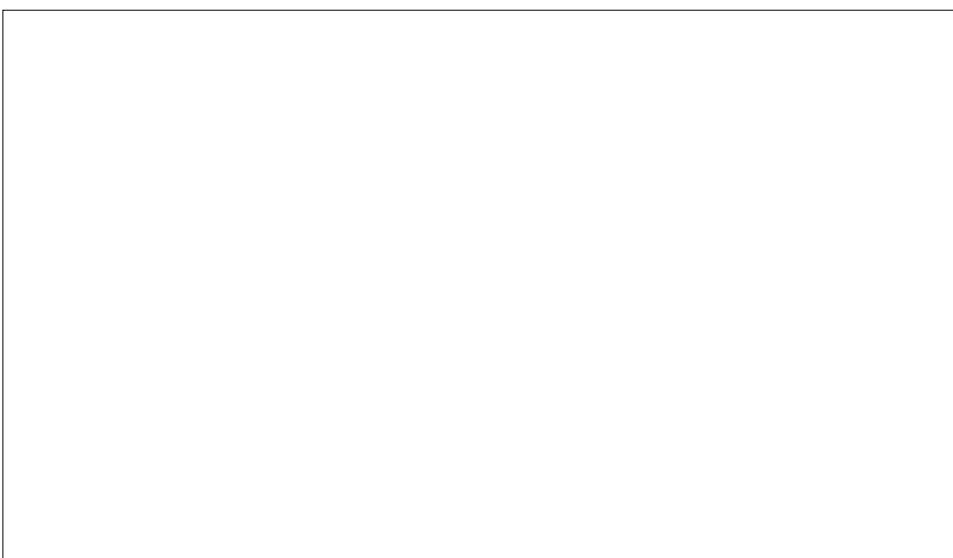
Part of the joke between advisers caught joking about them was that they knew no real lobby journalist would ask such impertinent questions.

And at the time none of them did.

Boris Johnson has had three directors of communications. Lee Cain was a journalist on The Sun and The Mirror. After leaving Downing Street he set up a PR company.

He was followed by James Slack who had been political editor of The Daily Mail. He left Downing Street in March for a job at The Sun.

Jack Doyle is the current Downing Street director of communications and was previously the associate editor of the Daily Mail. It is an old merry go round.



**ALLEGRA STRATTON laughs at the thought of journalists asking awkward questions**

The parliamentary press gallery was born as a way of keeping people out of parliament.

## Mob

In May 1803, a mob, as these things tend to be called, forced reporters from their usual seats in parliament.

In response the Speaker ruled that part of the public gallery would be reserved in

future for the gentlemen of the press.

Later the front of parliament—the lobby—also needed ordinary people kept out. In 1870 the Speaker was concerned that members of the public wandering into the lobby were an “inconvenience” to MPs.

So only those registered on a list kept by the Serjeant at Arms—lobbyists and certain

privileged reporters—would be allowed access.

By the end of the 19th century political journalism established a style—gallery reporters chronicled what was said, lobby correspondents used their inside track for gossip.

Like all posh clubs the lobby journalists invented rituals and rules for themselves.

They have “huddles” for big announcements. Not

naming MPs as sources still applies, hence the tedious use of “friends,” “people familiar with” and “sources close to”.

All are deliberate attempts to show they know things you don’t due to their closeness to those at the top.

They got a real role during the 1926 General Strike.

The cabinet decided to hold discreet daily briefings with selected journalists on how the strike was going.

## Conspiracy

This became a permanent secretive system of closed information-sharing of benefit to politicians and journalists.

Initially members of the lobby were supposed to deny the existence of the system.

Labour prime minister Harold Wilson praised it as “an essential thread of precious metal in our British parliamentary democracy”.

He later decided it was part of a conspiracy against him. He was probably right on both counts.

Under Margaret Thatcher, press secretary Bernard Ingham used the lobby to attack members of the cabinet that Thatcher didn’t like.

The system crumbled a bit under its own contradictions. When John Major was prime minister it became acceptable to say that briefings happened and for them to be attributed to “Downing Street sources”.

Under Labour, Alastair Campbell’s ego meant that allegations of excess “spin” saw him attribute briefings to “the Prime Minister’s official spokesman”—that is, him.

Oddly the room where the giggling Malcolm Tuckers were videoed was a failed attempt to mess with the lobby system. The £2.6 million media bunker in Downing Street was designed to bring US-style televised briefings so the government could control the information flow even more.

A combination of press hostility, and government and spin doctor infighting over what was the best way to lie to people, killed the idea.

To misquote Humbert Wolfe, “You cannot hope to bribe or twist, thank God! the British journalist. But, seeing what the man will do unbribed, there’s no occasion to as long as there is a PR job on offer somewhere.”

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# Why the weather isn't the real reason that the lights went out

Thousands of people were left without power after storms. Nick Clark looks at who runs the electricity networks and how our bills create their fat profits

 **SOMETIMES** the strong winds of a storm can uncover interesting things.

The business of who transports and distributes electricity usually happens just out of sight.

We all know who our energy supplier is. But we don't have much to do with the regional electricity network companies who own and run the power grids that channel electricity to our homes.

The aftermath of Storm Arwen was a reminder that we're at the mercy of the private businesses who run this vital infrastructure for profit. And we have no say over it whatsoever.

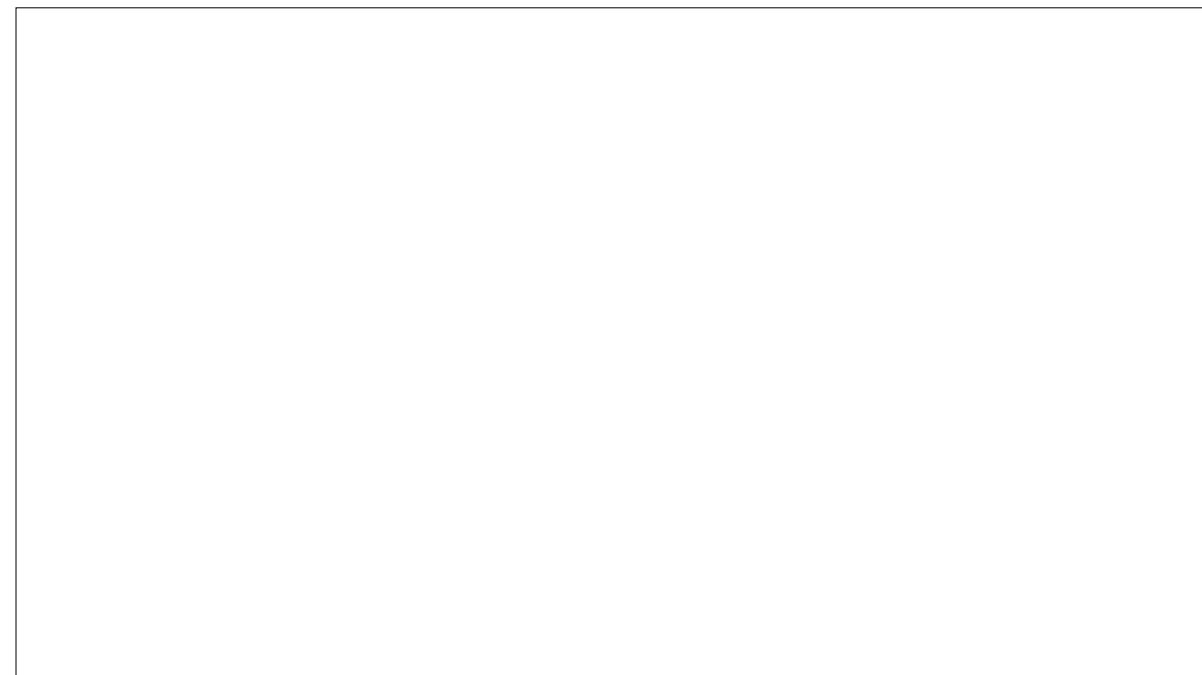
Some 10,500 people across Scotland and northern England went more than a week without power in the wake of the storm. Network companies struggled to repair damaged cables and pylons.

Tory business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng and the energy regulator Ofgem questioned whether the companies had spent enough on making sure their infrastructure could withstand high winds. If they hadn't, said Kwarteng, "there could be enforcement action".

Yet the system that pays the network operators—set up by the government and controlled by Ofgem—actively encourages them not to spend money.

How much profit they make depends directly on how little they spend on infrastructure.

Network companies get their money from people's electricity bills by charging energy suppliers to use their grid. That means we're paying to fill the network companies' coffers even though we don't have any



**PRIVATE COMPANIES** overestimate how much they will spend on infrastructure

say in who they are, much less what they do. Ofgem places caps—known as price controls—on how much the network companies can make through these charges.

It says this is about keeping energy bills down.

But the caps are designed with profit in mind.

The network companies and Ofgem agree an estimate of how much they think they'll spend on investing and repairing infrastructure.

Ofgem then allows the companies to charge this much, plus a little extra to sweeten up the bosses.

But Ofgem also "incentivises efficiency"—encourages cost cutting—by allowing networks to keep any money they didn't spend on infrastructure after all.

The profits come from the difference between how much Ofgem allows companies to charge and how much they actually spend.

So it's in the companies' interest to overestimate how much they need to spend from people's energy bills, and then not spend it.

Network bosses have already admitted they've spent more than 7 percent less than the £795 million

Ofgem allowed them to charge for protecting infrastructure against storms.

They insist they have spent enough—but they are making bumper profits.

The charity Citizens Advice said as early as 2017 that network companies made £7.5 billion in extra profits thanks to Ofgem's overestimates.

Northern Powergrid, which covers the whole of north east England and Yorkshire, made £125 million profit last year alone.

The thousands of people who the company left without power paid for it.

## Don't rely on Labour to bring energy back

 WHEN the Tories privatised the energy industry in the 1980s and 1990s they pretended it was all about creating a "shareholding democracy".

The big lie was that ordinary people could own and benefit from private energy companies by holding shares.

It was really all about giving the major investment banks and multinationals the chance to pile in—which is what they did. Now, repeated polls show most people support renationalising energy companies.

Labour Party supporters are angry that leader Keir Starmer insists Labour wouldn't renationalise the big six energy companies.

He's desperate to convince the bosses and the bankers that Labour is no longer a threat to them. The era of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, when Labour promised some renationalisation, is over. In 2019, Labour said it would bring the regional energy networks, the National Grid and the supply arms of the big six into public ownership.

Yet even Corbyn's Labour promised "compensation" to the energy companies' owners. It was a bid to placate the banks and financiers that threatened to wreck a Corbyn government with economic sabotage. It didn't work. In the run up to the 2019 general election National Grid and SSE Energy moved their British-regulated operations to new offshore holding companies in Switzerland, Hong Kong and Luxembourg.

Properly nationalising the entire energy industry would mean a confrontation with the investment banks and multinationals now embedded in all parts of the energy industry.

## Multinational firms put their squeeze on our bills

 ONE THING kept somewhat hidden from view is who exactly these network firm are.

The names of the nine electricity networks might give the impression that they're small, local businesses—Electricity North West, for example, or Western Power Distribution.

In fact, they're almost all owned and controlled by major investment banks and multinationals.

These reap the dividends of the fat profits to be made from energy bills. Northern Powergrid is

100 percent owned by US energy company Berkshire Hathaway Energy—to which it paid a dividend of £25.4 million last year. Berkshire Hathaway Energy is itself owned by giant conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway whose owner, multibillionaire Warren Buffett, is the tenth richest person in the world.

Western Power Distribution—which covers South Wales and the Midlands—is also 100 percent owned by a US energy company, PPL. Electricity North



Billionaire Warren Buffett

West made a profit of £122 million and paid its owners a total dividend of £30.7 million in 2020-2021.

Those owners are the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and

US investment bank JP Morgan's Infrastructure Investment Fund.

Scottish Power is owned by Spanish investment bank Iberdrola.

And UKPN, which covers London and the east and south east of England, is owned by three holding and investment companies based in Hong Kong.

All four gas distribution networks—SGN, Northern Gas Distribution Networks, Cadent, and Wales and West Utilities—are also owned by multinational holding

companies and banks. It's the exact same story with the "big six" energy supply companies too.

The point here isn't to complain that British industry and infrastructure is in the hands of foreign companies.

We'd be no better off if the owners were HSBC and Barclays banks.

It's that privatisation puts our most basic needs in the hands of the largest, richest companies in the world interested only in accumulating vast wealth.

**IN BRIEF****Bin workers vote for strikes in Coventry**

BIN WORKERS in Coventry have voted for strikes by 98.5 percent on over a 90 percent turnout.

The 70 Unite union members are set to strike from Tuesday of next week until Friday of next week, which is Christmas Eve.

They are then set to strike again for two days from 5 January and from 11 January to 14 January.

The workers are striking over being paid just £22,000 a year despite the shortage of qualified HGV drivers. And Coventry council is trying to change contracts regarding Christmas working times.

**Up in arms over 3.8 percent pay offer at Coulport naval base**

UNITE UNION members at the Royal Naval Armaments Depot Coulport, in Scotland, are set to strike over pay.

The 70 Unite members were set strike on Thursday of this week and Monday of next week.

Further strikes are scheduled for January and February if no progress is made in negotiations.

The ABL Alliance employers have refused to meet the RPI inflation rate from July at 3.8 percent.

**An important win for workers at Teesside port**

WORKERS EMPLOYED by PD Ports in Teesside have secured a two-year pay deal worth 7.35 percent. Bosses originally offered a single-year rise of 1.35 percent.

Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham said, "This is a significantly improved pay offer at a strategically important port."

"Companies operating in the Teesside Freeport area are expecting to see a huge economic benefit."

"In order to protect the jobs, pay and conditions of its members, Unite is closely monitoring the establishment of all freeport areas."

**Pay and pensions fight on the cards in civil service**

THE PCS union is set to start a consultative ballot of all its members over pay and pensions.

The union says civil service workers have lost an average of £1,000 after being forced to overpay into the scheme.

Workers' contributions should have been cut after the scheme was valued in 2019 but the government refused to act.

PCS says it will run the ballot in early 2021.

**PAY**

WINCANTON-B&amp;Q STRIKERS know their demands are winnable

# Wincanton workers vote to go all out

by JEANNIE ROBINSON

WORKERS FROM Wincanton B&Q warehouse in Worksop have voted for an all-out strike to win a 6 percent pay rise.

More than 150 of them met last Saturday to decide the next steps in their campaign, which has involved a week of strikes followed by a week of work to rule.

They voted unanimously, by a show of hands, to escalate to continuous action. The strike was set to begin on Monday 27 December, as Tory anti-union laws demand workers give bosses two weeks' notice before a strike.

Unite rep Patrick McGrath

explained that actually going back to work after the overtime ban had been double edged.

It was good because union members knew each other better after the strike and had felt their strength.

But it was demoralising seeing lorries moving again after they had brought the site to a standstill.

Also, management were intimidating individuals and trying to interfere with the right of union reps to talk to members.

Patrick added, "Only strong action is going to force management to negotiate and increase the current offer of 4 percent.

"We believe our demands

are winnable. We know it is hard at present to attract workers to do our jobs.

Management complain that the costs of commodities are rising, but so are their profits and the dividends they pay out."

A number of the pickets complained that they had worked hard through the crisis as "essential" workers, while B&Q maximised its profits by being allowed to open.

"Other stores, such as B&M and Home Bargains, have given staff Covid bonuses.

We've had nothing," said one. ● Unite has produced flyers and posters so people can leaflet outside B&Q stores. To get copies contact jeannie.rob48@gmail.com.

**TESCO**

## Every little doesn't help—reject pay cut

OVER 5,000 Usdaw union members were set to strike at Tesco distribution centres in Daventry Clothing, Google, Hinckley, Lichfield, Livingston, Magor, Peterborough and Southampton.

Workers rejected a 4 percent pay increase. Strikes were set to take place from Monday of next week until Christmas Eve.

Meanwhile Unite union Tesco workers including warehouse workers and HGV drivers at Livingston Distribution Depot in

Scotland are also set to strike after a 4 percent pay offer.

The depot provides stock to all Tesco stores in Scotland. Next Monday strikes will begin and will not cease before Christmas.

Coordinated action between the two unions is crucial to win demands and put pressure on bosses.

But the Unite union has called off strikes in Tesco across northern Ireland and England over the Christmas period.

Workers were offered a 5.5 percent increase

backdated to July 2021 and an additional 0.5 percent from February 2022.

Members are now being balloted on the deal and the union is strongly recommending to accept acceptance. If the deal is rejected members will strike in the new year.

Workers should be ready to vote against the deal that doesn't meet inflation for the full year.

And with other Tesco sites facing strikes, big and escalated action will boost the fight.

**HEALTH WORKERS**

## Where next for NHS pay?

IT'S LOOKING increasingly likely the government will get away with its imposition of a 3 percent "pay rise" in the health service without facing large scale strikes.

Results of a consultative ballot among health workers in the Unison union last week were disappointing.

While more than three quarters of those that voted said they wanted to strike, the turnout was low at just 24 percent.

Before the vote, Unison leaders said that only a turnout of at least 45 percent would trigger a formal ballot.

Unison's results compounded those of the nurses' RCN union which were reported last week. A smaller majority of RCN voters backed strikes, but also on a low turnout.

So far, only the smaller GMB union has moved to an actual strike ballot.

● Read more [bit.ly/NHS101221](http://bit.ly/NHS101221)

**STAGECOACH**

## Bus drivers to rev up action

STRIKING Stagecoach bus workers in South Yorkshire are set to escalate action to an all-out strike from January.

Unite union members at four depots across Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield started a second week of strikes over pay.

But they have also told bosses that an all-out strike will start unless the

union's 6 percent claim plus backdating is met.

Pickets at the Rawmarsh depot were joined by representatives from Barnsley and Rotherham trades councils and the Rotherham NEU union with their banners on Monday.

The South Yorkshire Better Buses campaign also handed over a solidarity Christmas card with 200 signatures.

**CHEP UK**

PCS union members joined the Unite picket line

## Indefinite strike against unpalatable pay offer

AFTER LIVELY pickets, workers at Chep UK in Manchester were set to begin an indefinite strike over pay on Friday of this week.

The action, by members of the Unite union, comes after a four-day strike over pay last week. The workers make and repair pallets, something that is in even greater demand.

Chep has offered workers just a 2 percent pay increase—well below inflation.

Yet the company made £30,000 profit per employee in 2019 and this rose to over £120,000 per employee last year.

So it can afford to give

workers a proper pay rise. The strikers worked all through lockdowns—why should the money they made for bosses not be given back to them?

Workers' morale is great. Strikers have turned back lorries, and the supply and quality of pallets will dwindle, putting more pressure on Chep.

Pickets run 24 hours and get great support from passing traffic.

Strikers are prepared to strike for as long as it takes to force Chep to pay what is fair.

● Messages of support to [ian.mccluskey@unitetheunion.org](mailto:ian.mccluskey@unitetheunion.org) Karen Reissmann

## TRANSPORT WORKERS

# Major strikes on track for the Tube

**THE LONDON** Underground is set for escalating battles over Christmas and in January. At present the issue is over forcing workers to do shifts on the Night Tube service.

In 2022 a raft of new issues affecting every Tube worker, including major job cuts, will come into play.

Train operators working on the Central and Victoria lines struck last Friday and Saturday evenings.

A further overnight strike was planned from 8.30pm on Friday 17 December until 4.29am on Saturday 18 December, again on the Central and Victoria lines.

Then there is set to be significant disruption with a full-day strike lasting from 4.30am on Saturday 18 December until 4.29am on Sunday 19 December.

This walkout will affect the Victoria, Central, Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, with Transport for London (TfL) bosses expecting severe disruption and “little or no service in some places”.

A much wider strike is possible. The RMT is balloting all its 10,000 members for strikes against mass job cuts.

## OUTSOURCING

## Barts workers back action against outsource Serco

NHS PRIVATISATION giant Serco took a blow last week as hundreds of its workers at a key NHS trust in London voted to strike.

Cleaners, porters and domestics working for Barts Health NHS trust over several hospitals in central and east London have voted by a whopping 97 percent to strike over their bosses’ pay insult.

The Unite union members are mainly from black and Asian backgrounds and already take home some 15 percent lower pay than they would if the NHS directly employed them.

Serco Group plc had a turnover of £3.9 billion last year.

But the firm pleads it can only offer these important workers at Barts a measly 1 percent “rise next” year.

But workers are having none of it and have balloted



TUBE WORKERS are determined to win

TfL has refused to give assurances on jobs, pensions and working conditions as the Tories demand big cuts in funding for the system. TfL has already announced plans to axe 600 posts.

The union says this is “the opening shot in a programme of jobs carnage that will target safety critical station grades”.

The RMT London region said it will “not stand by and watch a Labour mayor slash 600 jobs at the behest of a Tory government that refuses

to properly fund the Tube and wants its staff to pay the price for the pandemic.”

The ballot closes on 10 January.

■ RAIL unions are drawing up plans for a national strike as job cuts loom across the industry.

The RMT is preparing to ballot its members for strikes, with the union expecting compulsory redundancies at train operating companies and Network Rail. Such redundancies would mean

“trains are coming to a halt”, the TSSA union said.

Unions have been in talks since June over plans to slash costs in the industry. There are no guarantees to rule out forced job cuts after 31 December. Pay rises are also yet to be agreed, with inflation rising rapidly.

■ RAIL GOURMET staff in the RMT union at Edinburgh Waverley station are launching a new phase of strikes, starting on New Year’s Eve.

It is part of a continuing fight for respect and justice in the workplace as the company continues to fail to address the abuse and bullying of its staff.

■ THE WOOLWICH Ferry could be hit hard as 58 workers in the Unite union begin new rounds of strikes.

The 24-hour strikes start on Monday 3 January and are set for every Monday, Wednesday and Friday until the end of March. Besides the victimisation of two union reps, management have also failed to agree a new pay and reward scheme, are using excessive agency staff, and failing to provide adequate health and safety training.

## DELIVERY WORKERS

## Just striking at Just Eat

A STRIKE by delivery workers has spread to Chesterfield and Sunderland after initially beginning in Sheffield.

The delivery drivers and riders, who are members of the IWGB union, work for Just Eat and parent company Stuart delivery.

They are facing a wage cut of 25 percent per delivery.

Last week McDonald’s was forced to stop taking orders in Sheffield due to workers being on strike.

There were reports on social media that McDonald’s workers themselves were showing solidarity with the strikes by refusing to take orders.

Workers have now completed six days of strikes and say they planning more.

Their demands include £6 minimum per delivery, plus mileage and for waiting times to be paid at £15 an hour after the first ten minutes.

● Donate to the strike fund at [bit.ly/JustEatFund](https://bit.ly/JustEatFund)

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## How to build the vote for council and school strikes

THERE IS just under a month to go before the end of a major ballot for strikes by school and council workers in England and Wales.

Some 375,000 workers could strike after council bosses offered them a pay increase that’s well below inflation—effectively a pay cut.

The ballot of Unison union members is set to end on Friday 14 January.

Union activists are striving to ensure the voting turnout meets the 50 percent threshold demanded by Tory anti-union laws.

## Meeting

Cath Lewis, an activist in Leicester, said Unison members thought of ways to get the turnout following a pay campaign meeting last week.

“People were volunteering to go to different workplaces, to do videos of posting their ballots, trying to think of different stunts we can do to prompt people to vote,” she told Socialist Worker.

“It showed that there are people interested in doing stuff for the union.”

Where activists have campaigned, they’ve found a pool of bitterness after years of austerity that can feed into a strong vote for

strikes. But the national campaign from the union’s bureaucracy has so far been lacklustre and conservative.

Ameen Hadi, an officer in Salford City Unison, said regional activists have to ensure a good turnout by tapping into workers’ bitterness.

“Inflation is running close to 6 percent, and we’re going to get stung with a national insurance increase,” he told Socialist Worker.

“A lot of people in my branch can’t afford to put the heating on during the day.”

“During austerity we’re already working one day a week for free—it’s over 20 percent we’ve lost in real terms over the last few years. We’ve also lost half of our jobs in local government over the last ten years.”

“People in children’s services are working maybe 20 or 30 extra hours a week.”

Ameen said that’s why Salford City Unison has had several successful pay campaign meetings—with people who came saying they’ll encourage others to vote.

“We’ve created an atmosphere in meetings that means we’re more confident in meeting the threshold,” he said.

“You have to tap into the anger at the moment.”

## SANDWELL

## Action against fire & rehire

WORKERS AT Portway Lifestyle Centre and Tipton Leisure Centre struck against fire and rehire attacks on Tuesday of this week.

Bosses at Sandwell Leisure trust want to remove all staff from the national NJC negotiating body on pay, terms and conditions.

Bosses promised not to change any terms and conditions until the agreement expires in March 2022.

But now they want to make Covid-related absences count towards disciplinary

triggers. Members of the Unison union have already taken three one-day strikes in the dispute, which has been running for more than a year.

They voted by 85 percent on an 83 percent turnout to keep fighting.

Sandwell Unison branch secretary Tony Barnsley said, “Our members are determined to continue their fight against being unnecessarily fired and rehired against their will while the Trust still has £3.5million in the bank.”

## VICTIMISATION

## Round one to Paul Holmes

THE UNISON union has ended its suspension of leading left wing activist Paul Holmes.

Unison suspended Paul along with other branch officers, Nick Ruff and Cath Kinder, in January 2020.

But Holmes was told last week the suspension was lifted without any action against him.

Paul, who was elected Unison’s national president

earlier this year, is still suspended from his job at Kirklees Council.

As branch secretary of Kirklees Unison, Paul has led strikes and campaigns against council cuts.

Bosses suspended him in November 2019, and his disciplinary hearing has only recently ended.

He had not heard the result as Socialist Worker went to press.



A TORNADO hit the Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville in Illinois, but why were workers there?

# AMAZON'S GREED KILLS SIX WORKERS

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

**AMAZON BOSSSES have blood on their hands for sending workers into a warehouse in Edwardsville, Illinois, last Friday as a deadly tornado tore across the US.**

At least six people have been confirmed dead after the roof of the distribution centre was torn off by the winds.

Over 100 people were inside the building at the time of the collapse. They had been assured that coming into work would be safe.

While workers died billionaire Amazon boss Jeff Bezos celebrated his latest venture in space tourism.

His latest 11-minute flight emitted more carbon than one billion people will produce in a lifetime.

One of the victims, Austin J. McEwen, died while sheltering in a bathroom on the instruction of his managers.

Amazon disputes that anyone was told to shelter in

bathrooms, but many workers at the warehouse have said this is a lie.

One worker David Kosiak said, "I was at the end of my route. I was just getting in the building, and they started screaming, 'Shelter in place'

"We were in the bathrooms. That's where they sent us. It sounded like a train came through the building. The ceiling tiles came flying down.

"It was very loud. They made us shelter in place until we left—it was at least two and a half hours in there."

Amazon's working practices are also to blame for authorities being slow to account for how many people were inside the building.

The use of precarious and part-time workers at the warehouse meant the company didn't know how many people it employed or had working at the time.

Amazon has said it will donate a mere £754,000 to the Edwardsville Community Foundation to try to save face. In comparison, in the



Remains of a candlestick factory in Kentucky

**The factory paid some workers £6.04 an hour**

"Everything was going good, and then the sirens went off, and we barely had time to get people to the hallways before it hit.

"I was on the floor in the hallway, and I looked up and saw the sky, and that's not normal at all. The whole building was just gone, in shambles.

"There were people screaming, people trying to climb out and people who were crushed. One of my girls was crushed really bad."

Lousy pay and unsafe conditions were the grim reality for those who worked at the factory.

The average pay for a production worker at the company has been listed as a tiny £6.79 an hour. But there are reports that the factory paid some workers £6.04 an hour.

At the time of the collapse the factory was also employing prison labour, with seven jail inmates inside.

Safety concerns over the factory had been flagged up in 2019 after the US

Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspected the factory.

It found 12 safety violations at the factory—seven labelled "serious".

Across the US it is feared that more than 100 people have died, with many more missing in the destruction left by tornadoes.

The "Quad-State Tornado", is considered the longest continuous tornado in US history.

Tornadoes have occurred in the southern states during December in the past.

But none have been as ferocious or as deadly as the ones that hit last week.

A warmer world caused by increased fossil fuel emissions will mean more frequent extreme weather events, including tornadoes.

The destruction these tornadoes cause is a reminder of the deadly consequences of bosses exploiting our planet.

And it shows clearly that they would rather workers die than risk losing profits.